

The North Carolina Education Research Data Center

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Founding Director**



Increased Demand for High-Quality Research in Education Policy

- Prior to 2000, studies in education policy had been plagued by poor-quality data with small, non-representative samples and no prospective follow-up.
- Era of evidence increased demand for better analysis.
- No Child Left Behind Act increased collection of high-quality data, for accountability purposes. In NC, data collection had started in 1990s with its ABCs program.

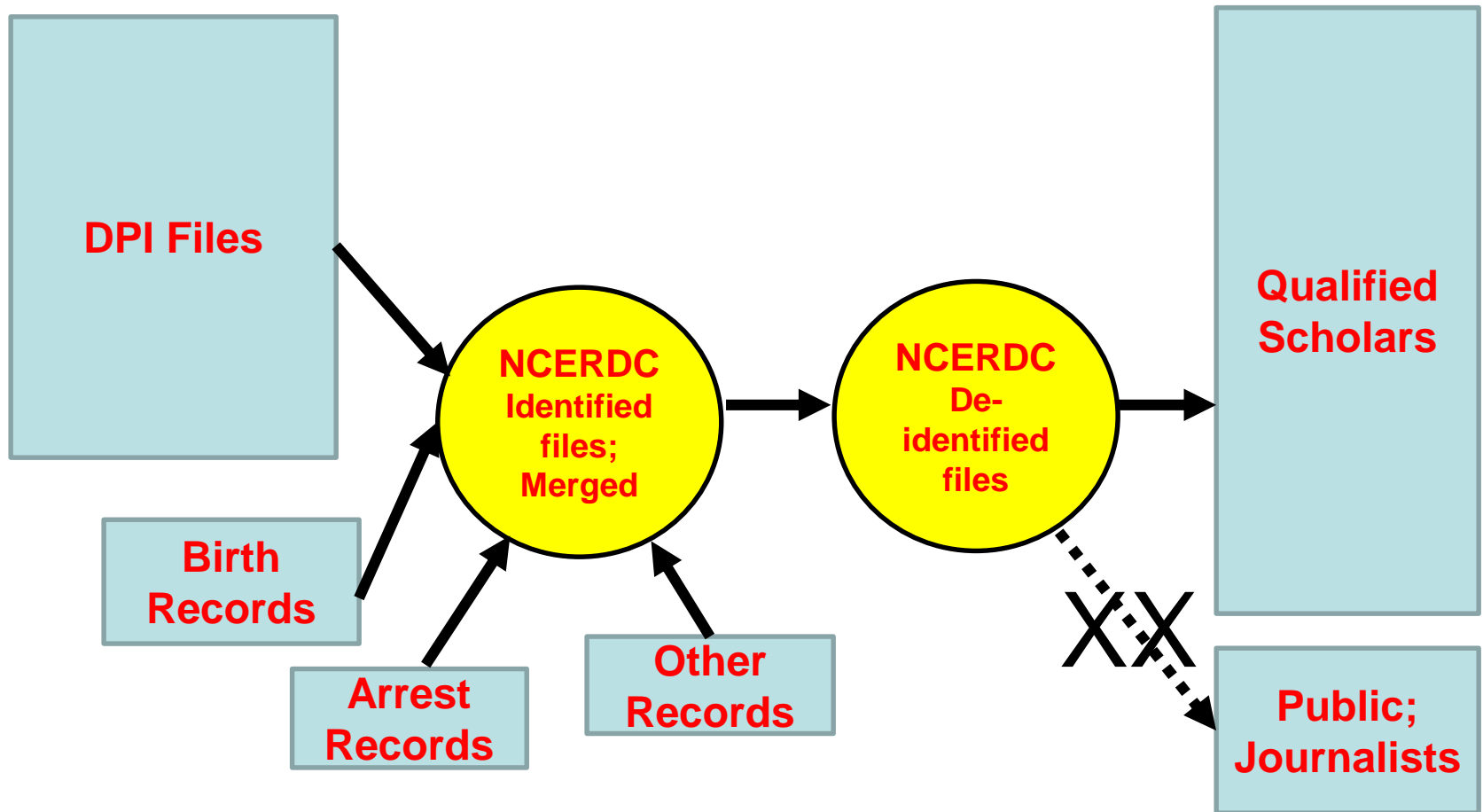
Establishment of the NC Education Research Data Center

- A partnership between Duke University and the NC Department of Public Instruction
- Established in January 2001, renewed through 2021
- Initially funded by Spencer Foundation, now fees
- 375 approved research projects, 50 dissertations
 - Half initiated outside of NC
 - All for research, not for political use or journalism

Basic Terms

- NCERDC acts as agent of NC DPI.
- DPI provides electronic data files to NCERDC.
 - 4,000 files per year; identifiers intact
- Legal authorization: “to improve education of children in NC”
- NCERDC cleans, stores, merges files.
- Researchers apply to receive customized, de-identified data files for a specific study.
- Four-person board establishes policy, ensures data security, and reviews requests.

NCERDC Structure



Data Files in NCERDC

- Annual student files
 - 1,459,852 children in 2,592 charter & public schools
 - Test scores, special ed, graduation, discipline
 - Teacher and principal credentials; \$\$\$ school information
- Merged longitudinally back to 1993
- Can be merged with other files
 - Birth records, child abuse registry, arrest, Medicaid, higher education
 - Can create peer context information
 - Add local context data, such as job losses and natural disasters

Examples

- Evaluate impact of funding for pre-kindergarten program
 - State funding varied (randomly) across 100 counties and 20 years
 - Find that: Children living in well-funded counties at age 4 have higher test scores in elementary school at least through grade 5
- Evaluate impact of lead exposure on student outcomes
 - Find that: Higher lead in housing walls associated w/ lower test scores
- Evaluate impact of middle school on student trajectories
 - 85% of districts have k-5, 6-8, 9-12 system (others have k-6 or k-8)
 - Sixth graders in k-5 system have more substance use infractions
 - Same students have worse outcomes in high school

National Opportunities

- NSF Network co-led by D. Figlio and K. Dodge
 - 60 scholars and state-level ed policy leaders
- Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS)
 - > \$600 million to states to develop databases
 - Little used for research, to date
- Race to the Top and Early Learning Challenge
- Barriers can be overcome
 - Legal, through statute
 - Data security, through standards
 - Relationships of trust, through incentives and careful use
 - Public will, through leadership